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Technical Report · January 1996

DOI: 10.13140/2.1.1.1617.2802

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Manual

SOURCES OF MEANING PROFILE-REVISED

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Peterborough, Ontario, Canada

June, 1996

THE SOURCES OF MEANING PROFILE-REVISED (SOMP-R)

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Background

The pursuit of meaning has been identified as an important developmental process. We noted elsewhere (Reker & Wong, 1988) that a proper understanding of personal meaning requires both a bottom-up or elemental (Lockian realism) and a top-down or holistic (Kantian idealism) view of life. Life not only contains meanings at the level of activities, quests, and goals but specific activities need to be integrated into a larger and higher purpose. Individuals create meaning through making choices, taking actions, and entering into relationships (provisional meaning) and discover meaning from the givens of life, such as the existence of the universe or the existence of life (existential or global meaning).

The Sources of Meaning Profile (SOMP) is a 7-point Likert measure of provisional meaning. It is an index of the sources that provide an individual with a greater sense of meaning and purpose in life. The development of the SOMP was based on a thorough review of the available literature through which a variety of potential sources were identified. Of these, the most commonly cited sources were chosen to make up the SOMP scale. Thus, a high total score on the SOMP reflects the existence of a large network of meaningful sources (density) in the present life of the respondent.

The original SOMP consisted of 13 items. The sample, the factor structure, validation support, and item means of SOMP are presented in Tables 1 through 5 (pp. 2-5).

Table 1

Demographic characteristics of young, middle-aged and older adults

Characteristics	1 Young (18-29)	2 Middle-aged (30-59)	3 Elderly (60-98)	Life-span (18-98)
Sample Size				
Males	60	60	60	180
Females	60	60	60	180
Mean Age	22.2	41.7	69.6	44.5
S.D.	2.9	7.5	6.7	20.4
Marital Status				
Single	86%	5%	2%	30%
Married	14%	83%	67%	55%
Separated	0%	4%	1%	2%
Divorced	0%	7%	3%	3%
Widow/er	0%	1%	27%	10%
Educational Level				
8th grade or less	0%	0%	13%	5%
Part high school	4%	20%	27%	18%
High school graduate	12%	30%	30%	24%
Part university	59%	20%	18%	31%
University graduate	18%	15%	7%	13%
Post-graduate	7%	15%	5%	9%

Table 2

Factor structure of sources of provisional meaning

Dimension	Factors ²			
	I	II	III	IV
<u>I. Individualism (I)</u>				
6. Personal growth	<u>.72</u>	.29	.11	.12
5. Personal achievement	<u>.67</u>	.01	.16	.13
3. Creative activities	<u>.64</u>	-.01	.30	-.10
1. Leisure activities	<u>.55</u>	.14	-.11	.31
<u>II. Self-transcendence (ST)</u>				
4. Personal relationships	.21	<u>.71</u>	-.11	.22
10. Enduring values/ideals	.17	<u>.70</u>	.19	.21
7. Religious activities	-.16	<u>.66</u>	.27	-.08
9. Altruism	.35	<u>.54</u>	.28	-.13
<u>III. Collectivism (C)</u>				
12. Legacy	.09	.02	<u>.76</u>	.22
11. Traditions & culture	.12	.33	<u>.67</u>	.16
8. Societal causes	.32	.25	<u>.59</u>	-.12
<u>IV. Self-preoccupation (SP)</u>				
13. Financial security	.04	-.03	.37	<u>.77</u>
2. Meeting basic needs	.17	.18	-.01	<u>.75</u>
Percent Variance	28.9	10.2	9.3	8.9

²Loadings > .40 are underscored.

Table 3

Correlation of SOMP levels with measures of "ultimate" meaning

SOMP Levels	Purpose	Coherence	Personal Meaning
Self-transcendence (ST)	.31***	.53***	.49***
Collectivism (C)	.23***	.38***	.35***
Individualism (I)	.12*	.15**	.16**
Self-preoccupation (SP)	.11*	.11*	.12*

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed).

Table 4

Means (adjusted for marital status and education) of sources of provisional meaning as a function of age

Provisional Meaning	Age Groups			F	Tukey HSD		
	1 18-29	2 30-59	3 60-98		1vs2	2vs3	1vs3
(n) Multivariate F	(120)	(120)	(120)	3.45***			
<u>Self-transcendence (ST)</u>							
Personal relationships	6.47	6.46	6.50	<1.00			
Enduring values/ideals	5.88	5.92	6.24	3.28*	*		*
Religious activities	3.50	3.76	4.33	4.59**	*		**
Altruism	4.94	5.07	5.49	4.41*	*		**
<u>Collectivism (C)</u>							
Legacy	4.30	4.24	4.21	<1.00			
Traditions & culture	4.21	4.67	5.09	6.77**			**
Societal causes	3.63	3.36	4.13	6.35**	**		**
<u>Individualism (I)</u>							
Personal growth	6.09	5.93	5.80	1.61			
Personal achievement	6.00	6.12	5.53	7.27***	**		**
Creative activities	4.86	4.44	4.79	1.86			
Leisure activities	6.15	5.84	5.97	1.55			
<u>Self-preoccupation (SP)</u>							
Financial security	5.73	5.64	5.89	1.08			
Meeting basic needs	6.15	5.84	5.97	1.55			

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 5

Means (adjusted for marital status and education) of sources of provisional meaning as a function of gender

Provisional Meaning	Males	Females	F
(n) Multivariate F	(180)	(180)	3.63***
<hr/>			
<u>Self-transcendence (ST)</u>			
Personal relationships	6.28	6.66	17.58***
Enduring values/ideals	5.83	6.21	10.81***
Religious activities	3.49	4.24	13.90***
Altruism	4.89	5.44	14.75***
<u>Collectivism (C)</u>			
Legacy	4.20	4.29	1.30
Traditions & culture	4.56	4.75	<1.00
Societal causes	3.65	3.76	<1.00
<u>Individualism (I)</u>			
Personal growth	5.84	6.04	3.13
Personal achievement	5.81	5.97	1.62
Creative activities	4.37	5.02	14.09***
Leisure activities	5.94	6.03	<1.00
<u>Self-preoccupation (SP)</u>			
Financial security	5.76	5.75	<1.00
Meeting basic needs	6.10	6.18	<1.00

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

The Sources of Meaning Profile-Revised (SOMP-R)

The SOMP-R is a revised version of the original SOMP. The SOMP-R is an improvement in wording and structure and contains four additional items pertaining to humanistic concerns, hedonistic activities, material possessions, and relationship with nature. Scoring for the 17-item SOMP-R is on a 7-point "not at all meaningful" to "extremely meaningful" rating scale. To obtain a total score for each subject, simply sum the ratings across all items. A taxonomy of sources of meaning is presented in Table 6.

Table 6

Taxonomy of Sources of Meaning in Life

1. Leisure activities	10. Enduring values/ideals
2. Meeting basic needs	11. Traditions and culture
3. Creative activities	12. Leaving a legacy
4. Personal relationships	13. Financial security
5. Personal achievements	14. Humanistic concerns
6. Personal growth	15. Hedonistic activities
7. Religious activities	16. Material possessions
8. Societal/political causes	17. Relationship with nature
9. Service to others	

Factor Scores. The total score on the SOMP-R can be further divided to yield four factor scores (the four factors were identified through a principal components factor analysis of the initial 13-item SOMP): Self-Transcendence (Items 4, 7, 9, 10, 17), Collectivism (Items 8, 11, 12, 14),

Individualism (1, 3, 5, 6), and Self-Preoccupation (Items 2, 13, 15, 16). Self-Preoccupation refers to sources that meet and satisfy the immediate needs of the respondent. Individualism refers to sources that focus on self-improvement, self-development, self-growth, and the realisation of one's potential. Collectivism refers to sources that focus on the betterment of the group, on areas that involve service to others and dedication to a larger societal or political cause. Self-Transcendence refers to sources that transcend the self and that encompass cosmic meaning or ultimate meaning. Factor scores can be calculated by summing the ratings of items pertaining to each factor and dividing by the number of items.

Breadth Score. It is also possible to calculate an index of the breadth or diversity of highly meaningful sources. To obtain a breadth score, identify only individual sources with a meaningfulness rating of 5 or greater (5,6,or 7). For each subject, count the number of items that meet that criterion for a total breadth score.

Individual Item Scores. Researchers may wish to analyze and report the results of the SOMP-R item-by-item. While this approach provides more detailed information on each source of meaning, it is at the expense of unknown reliability.

Reliability

The reliability of the SOMP-R has been investigated in a number of different studies in Canada, Australia, and Israel. The internal consistency and test-retest reliabilities are reported in Table 7. Alpha coefficients range from .71 to .80, with a median of .77. The three month stability coefficient was .70. Thus, the reliability of the SOMP-R appears to be quite satisfactory for research purposes.

Table 7

Reliability of the Sources of Meaning Profile-Revised (SOMP-R)

Study	Sample	Alpha	Test-retest
Ellis (1994)	113 Canadian adults, aged 17-75 years	.71	---
Prager (1995)	300 Israeli adults, aged 18-93 years	.74	---
Prager (1996)	430 Australian adults, aged 18-91 years	.78	.70 (3 months)
Reker (1991)	360 Canadian adults, aged 18-97 years	.77	---
Reker (1992)	96 Canadian university students	.80	---
Reker (1996)	117 Canadian university students	.77	---

Reliability of Factor Scores. The internal consistency reliability (alpha coefficient) of the factor scores were investigated by Ellis (1994) and Reker (1992, 1996). In addition to the four independent factors, the factors Self-Transcendence and Collectivism were combined to form a Transcendence dimension; the factors Individualism and Self-Preoccupation were combined to form an Actualizing dimension. Results are presented in Table 8.

Table 8

Reliability of Factor Scores

SOMP-R Factor	Ellis (1994) (N = 113)	Reker (1992) (N = 96)	Reker (1996) (N = 117)
Transcendence	.72	.77	.80
Self-Transcendence	.50	.65	.56
Collectivism	.65	.67	.79
Actualizing	.76	.70	.59
Individualism	.74	.41	.46
Self-Preoccupation	.46	.66	.64

The alpha coefficients for individual SOMP-R factors are generally weak. The Transcendence and Actualizing dimensions, however, reached acceptable levels for research purposes.

Validity

SOMP-R Total. Concurrent validity of the SOMP-R was investigated in a study of 44 third year psychology students using personal meaning, as measured by the Life Attitude Profile-Revised (Reker, 1992), as the primary criterion variable. The SOMP-R correlated .42 ($p < .005$) with the personal meaning index. In a study by Ellis (1994) of 113 young, middle-aged and older adults, the SOMP-R correlated .29 ($p < .01$) with personal meaning and .26 ($p < .01$) with a measure of psychological well-being. The SOMP-R has also been shown to correlate inversely with the Beck Depression Scale ($r = -.35$, $N=96$, $p < .001$) and positively with Wong's measure of Self-

Transcendence ($r = .41, N=39, p < .01$).

SOMP-R Dimensions. The concurrent validity of the Transcendent and Actualizing dimensions were investigated in a study of 96 university students. Criterion validity measures included the Personal Meaning Index (PMI) of the LAP-R (Reker, 1992) and the Values Survey (VS), a modified 12-item measure of three value orientations based on Rokeach's terminal values. The value orientations are hedonistic (e.g, pleasure, exciting life), self-actualizing (e.g., self-respect, sense of accomplishment), and self-transcendent (e.g., altruism, cultural ties). The results, shown in Table 9, support the validity of the SOMP-R dimensions.

Table 9

Convergent and Discriminant Validity of SOMP-R Dimensions

Criterion Measures	SOMP-R Dimensions	
	Transcendent	Actualizing
Hedonistic Value	-.45***	.05
Self-Actualizing Value	.09	.27**
Self-Transcendent Value	.36***	-.25*
Personal Meaning (LAP-R)	.44***	.11

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